

Radio signature of cosmological structure formation shocks

Matthias Hoeft* and Marcus Brüggen*

International University Bremen, Campus Ring 1, 28759 Bremen, Germany

ABSTRACT

In the course of the formation of cosmological structures, large shock waves are generated in the intra-cluster medium. In analogy to processes in supernova remnants, these shock waves may generate a significant population of relativistic electrons which, in turn, produce observable synchrotron emission. The extended radio relics found at the periphery of several clusters and possibly also a fraction of radio halo emission may have this origin. Here we derive an analytic expression for (i) the total radio power in the downstream region of a cosmological shock wave and (ii) the width of the radio-emitting region. These expressions predict a spectral slope close to -1 for strong shocks. Moderate shocks, such as those produced in mergers between clusters of galaxies, lead to a somewhat steeper spectrum. Moreover, we predict an upper limit for the radio power of cosmological shocks. Comparing our results to the radio relics in Abell 115, 2256, and 3667, we conclude that the magnetic field in these relics is typically at a level of $0.1 \mu\text{G}$. Magnetic fields in the intra-cluster medium are presumably generated by the shocks themselves, this allows us to calculate the radio emission as a function of the cluster temperature. The resulting emissions agree very well with the radio power-temperature relation found for cluster halos. Finally, we show that cosmic accretion shocks generate less radio emission than merger shock waves. The latter may, however, be detected with upcoming radio telescopes.

Key words: galaxies: clusters: general – radio continuum: general – diffuse radiation – radiation mechanisms: non-thermal – methods: analytical

1 INTRODUCTION

Diffuse radio objects that extend over several Mpc but have no optical counterpart have been observed in several clusters of galaxies. These objects fall into two categories: radio halos are centrally located in the cluster, they are fairly regular in shape and show very little polarisation. In contrast, radio relics appear at the periphery of clusters, have a filamentary morphology and are often highly polarised. Abell 3667, for instance, shows a spectacular double relic (Röttgering et al. 1997), where the two radio objects, separated by ~ 4 Mpc, straddle symmetrically the cluster X-ray emission. Similarly extended and remote relics have also been found in A115 (Govoni et al. 2001), A2256 (Giovannini et al. 1999), and A2345 (Giovannini et al. 1999) to name just a few. All of these clusters also show signs of an ongoing or recent merger: A115 has a double peak in the centre in X-ray observations (Shibata et al.

* e-mail: m.hoeft@iu-bremen.de, m.brueggen@iu-bremen.de

1999), A2256 shows also a double peak (Sun et al. 2002), A2345 is assumed to be a dynamically young system since it shows multiple X-ray substructures (see discussion in Dahle et al. 2002), and in A3667, among other indications, a cold front has been found which is presumably related to a slightly supersonically moving substructure (Vikhlinin & Markevitch 2002). In particular, the last example suggests that the relics are located at the shock wave that has been produced by the substructure. Roettiger et al. (1999) were able to reproduce the X-ray morphology and the location of the radio emission for this particular cluster in a merger simulation.

Even if the X-ray emission at the periphery of galaxy clusters is too faint to identify clearly shock fronts, radio relics seem to trace cosmological shock waves. Two models have been proposed for the origin of radio relics: They could either be caused by diffusive shock acceleration of electrons at the shock waves themselves (Enßlin et al. 1998; Miniati et al. 2001), or they could be old radio bubbles that are compressed by the passing shock wave and thus induced to emit observable synchrotron emission again (Enßlin & Gopal-Krishna 2001; Enßlin & Brüggen 2002; Hoeft et al. 2004). The former relics are sometimes called *radio gischt*, while the latter ones are known as *radio phoenix* (Kempner et al. 2004). The radio relic in A85 (Slee et al. 2001) may serve due to its size, morphology, and strong polarization as prototype for the radio phoenix class.

Radio halos, in contrast, do not directly trace the shock fronts. Instead, the radio morphology is similar to the overall X-ray morphology of the cluster (Govoni et al. 2001). The radio spectrum of halos tends to steepen with radius (Feretti et al. 2004, 2005). This may be regarded as evidence that the emitting electrons are accelerated by turbulence in the ICM (Brunetti 2004), which is a result of a merger. However, the origin of the halos is still unclear. There is increasing evidence that halos are indeed related to cluster mergers, but it is a subject of a debate whether the relativistic electron population that is responsible for the radio emission is emitted by a central AGN, whether it is produced by strong shocks, whether it stems from the decay of relativistic protons or whether it is generated by turbulence in the downstream region of the shocks (for a review see e.g. Feretti 2005). Interestingly, the radio power of halos scales with the cluster X-ray luminosity (Feretti 2005) or, equivalently, with its temperature (Keshet et al. 2004). Therefore, the non-thermal component in a galaxy cluster, if existent, seems to be related to the thermal plasma.

Numerical simulations show that the formation of the large-scale structures leads to a variety of shocks in the intra-cluster medium (ICM) and inter-galactic medium (IGM) (Miniati et al. 2000; Ryu et al. 2003; Pfrommer et al. 2006; Hoeft et al. 2006). These shocks are crucial for the thermal state of the ICM. As matter falls into the deep potential wells of galaxy clusters, its shocks to the high temperature of the ICM of $\sim 10^7 - 10^8$ K. Ryu et al. (2003) distinguish between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ shocks. The former affect material that is already heated to roughly the cluster temperature, whereas the latter heat rather cold gas for the first time. Hence, internal shocks are typically weak while external shocks are very strong.

Cosmic rays with energies up to $\sim 10^{15}$ eV are presumably accelerated at the shock fronts of supernova remnants (e.g. Berezhko et al. 2003; Vink & Laming 2003). The acceleration is believed to be caused by diffuse shock acceleration: Particles may be scattered repeatedly between the upstream and the downstream regions, separated by the shock. Each time the particle crosses the front, it gains kinetic energy (see for a review Axford et al. 1978; Bell 1978a,b; Blandford & Ostriker 1978). Even though the physical conditions of shock waves in the ICM are somewhat different from those in supernova remnants, one would also expect diffuse shock acceleration to be efficient at cosmological shocks.

Various groups have tried to estimate the radio emission of the shock fronts by combining

the probability distribution of cosmic shock fronts with models for diffuse shock acceleration and the subsequent synchrotron emission. Keshet et al. (2004) found that 10 % of the extragalactic radio background below 500 MHz should be caused by cosmic structure formation shocks for Λ CDM cosmology. They assumed that the emission comes mainly from external accretion shocks, in particular those that surround massive clusters of galaxies. Essential for the radio emission is the strength of the magnetic field since the emission is synchrotron emission. Unfortunately, the magnetic field distribution in clusters of galaxies and their surroundings is difficult to determine and still poorly constrained (for a review see Govoni & Feretti 2004).

In this paper, we compute the radio emission in the downstream region of a shock front. We assume that diffuse shock acceleration produces a relativistic electron population with a power-law distribution in the energy spectrum (Sec. 2.2). As the plasma moves downstream, the high-energy electrons cool by inverse Compton and synchrotron losses (Sec. 2.3). The main objective of this paper is to derive an analytic expression for (i) the total radio power in the downstream region of a cosmological shock wave and (ii) the width of the radio-emitting region. In particular, we wish to explore the dependence of the power, spectral shape and spatial extent of the radio emission on the magnetic field and the shock parameters.

We apply our model to the relics observed in Abell 115, 2256, and 3667 and infer the magnetic field strength in the relic region (Sec. 3). Assuming that the magnetic field energy density is a fixed fraction of the thermal energy allows us to express the radio power as a function of the cluster temperature (Sec. 4). Finally, we make predictions for the radio emission of cosmic accretion shocks (Sec. 5).

2 RADIO EMISSION BY NON-RADIATIVE SHOCKS

2.1 Non-radiative shocks

A shock surface separates two regions: The upstream plasma moves with velocity v_u towards the shock front, while the downstream plasma departs with v_d . As the plasma passes through the shock front, mass, momentum, and energy fluxes are conserved, which is expressed in the Rankine-Hugoniot relations:

$$\begin{aligned} \rho_u v_u &= \rho_d v_d \\ P_u + \rho_u v_u^2 &= P_d + \rho_d v_d^2 \\ \frac{1}{2} v_u^2 + u_u + \frac{P_u}{\rho_u} &= \frac{1}{2} v_d^2 + u_d + \frac{P_d}{\rho_d}, \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where ρ denotes mass density, P pressure, and u specific internal energy. On timescales relevant for the shock propagation, we assume that the intra-cluster medium behaves like a polytropic, ideal gas. Hence, the pressure can be written as

$$P = (\gamma - 1) \rho u, \tag{2}$$

where γ is the adiabatic index, and the specific internal energy depends only on the gas temperature, T ,

$$(\gamma - 1) \mu m_p u = k_B T, \tag{3}$$

where m_p is the proton mass and μ is the molecular weight. We determine the latter by adopting a fully ionised plasma with primordial chemical composition. In contrast to the conserved properties, the entropy of the plasma is increased by the dissipation at the shock front. For simplicity the term ‘entropy’ will refer throughout this paper to a monotonic

function of it, namely the entropic index,

$$S \equiv u \rho^{1-\gamma}. \quad (4)$$

The strength of non-radiative shocks in a polytropic gas can be characterised by a single parameter, e. g. the compression ratio

$$r \equiv \frac{\rho_d}{\rho_u}, \quad (5)$$

or, equivalently, by the entropy ratio

$$q \equiv \frac{S_d}{S_u}. \quad (6)$$

The ratio of the specific internal energies can be given as a function of the compression and entropy ratios

$$\frac{u_d}{u_u} = \frac{S_d}{S_u} \left(\frac{\rho_d}{\rho_u} \right)^{\gamma-1} = q r^{\gamma-1}. \quad (7)$$

Combining the conservation laws, Eq. (2), and using the definition of the entropy, Eq. (4), allows us to relate the compression and the entropy ratios by the implicit equation

$$r = \frac{(\gamma + 1) q r^\gamma + (\gamma - 1)}{(\gamma - 1) q r^\gamma + (\gamma + 1)}. \quad (8)$$

Hence, if we can determine the entropy ratio, q , for a shock we can compute the compression ratio by Eq. (8) and finally the ratio of internal energies by Eq. (7).

Customarily, the strength of a shock is characterised by the upstream Mach number

$$\mathcal{M} = \frac{v_u}{c_u}, \quad (9)$$

where c_u denotes the upstream sound speed, which depends on the specific internal energy by

$$c_u^2 = \gamma(\gamma - 1) u_u. \quad (10)$$

Invoking flux conservation, Eq. (2), we can rewrite the Mach number

$$\mathcal{M}^2 = \frac{1}{c_u^2} \frac{\rho_d}{\rho_u} \frac{P_d - P_u}{\rho_d - \rho_u} = \frac{r}{\gamma} \frac{q r^\gamma - 1}{r - 1}. \quad (11)$$

For large Mach numbers the entropy ratio is proportional to \mathcal{M}^2 , see Fig. 1. For later use we rewrite the downstream velocity

$$v_d^2 = \frac{\gamma - 1}{q r^\gamma} \frac{q r^\gamma - 1}{r - 1} u_d \equiv C_v^2 u_d, \quad (12)$$

2.2 Diffuse shock acceleration

In supernova remnants, there is evidence that electrons and protons are accelerated by diffuse shock acceleration (DSA) to energies of $\sim 10^{15}$ eV (e.g. Berezhko et al. 2003; Vink & Laming 2003). In DSA, particles are accelerated by multiple shock crossings, in a first-order Fermi process. If the shock thickness is much smaller than the diffusion scale which in turn has to be much smaller than the curvature of the shock front a one-dimensional diffusion-convection equation can be solved (Axford et al. 1978; Bell 1978a,b; Blandford & Ostriker 1978). The result is that the energy spectrum of suprathermal electrons is a power-law distribution, $n_E \propto$

E^{-s} . The spectral index, s , of the accelerated particles is only related to the compression ratio at the shock front

$$s = \frac{r + 2}{r - 1}. \quad (13)$$

For strong, non-radiative shocks with Mach number $\gtrsim 10$, the compression ratio is always close to 4, hence the slope s is always close to 2. This allows to explain the spectrum of cosmic rays over a huge range of energies and may be considered as a piece of evidence for DSA. For a review of diffuse shock acceleration see Drury (1983); Blandford & Eichler (1987); Jones & Ellison (1991); Malkov & O'C Drury (2001).

Diffuse shock acceleration theory suffers from the complexity of real shock fronts and the highly non-linear interaction between different processes such as cosmic rays and magnetic waves. The efficiency of accelerating electrons and protons has been inferred from the observation of supernova remnants. For instance, Dyer et al. (2001) estimated for SN 1006 that a few percent of the shock energy is transferred to supra-thermal particles. Similar to Keshet et al. (2004), we assume that a fixed fraction ξ_e of thermal energy injected at the shock front goes into the acceleration of suprathermal electrons.

Moreover, we multiply the spectrum by an upper cut-off factor since electrons can only be accelerated to finite energies. Typically, the maximum energy is estimated by comparing the acceleration e -folding time and the cooling time (Keshet et al. 2003). We use here a smoothed high-energy cut-off, the reason for this particular choice will be become clear in the next section. Thus, the electron spectrum generated by DSA, is given by

$$n_E(E) \equiv \frac{dn_e}{dE} = \begin{cases} n_e C_{\text{spec}} \frac{1}{m_e c^2} \tilde{e}^{-s} \left\{ 1 - \frac{\tilde{e}}{\tilde{e}_{\text{max}}} \right\}^{s-2} & : \tilde{e} < \tilde{e}_{\text{max}} \\ 0 & : \text{elsewhere} \end{cases}, \quad (14)$$

where we have used the abbreviation $\tilde{e} = E/m_e c^2$. The normalisation constant can be interpreted as follows: We compute the electron number density of electrons with energies in the interval $[E, E + \Delta E]$. If we choose $E = \Delta E = m_e c^2$, the number density becomes

$$n_E \Delta E = n_e C_{\text{spec}}.$$

Hence, C_{spec} gives basically the fraction of electrons at $E = m_e c^2$.

We determine the fraction of suprathermal electrons by postulating that a fixed fraction ξ_e of the energy injected at the shock front goes into the acceleration of electrons to suprathermal energies. After passing the shock, the downstream gas has gained a thermal energy of

$$u_d \rho_d - r^\gamma u_u \rho_u = u_d \rho_d \frac{q - 1}{q},$$

where $r^\gamma u_u \rho_u$ would be the energy density after pure adiabatic compression. Hence, the spectrum can be normalised by

$$\int_{E_{\text{min}}}^{\infty} dE n_E(E) E = \xi_e u_d \rho_d \frac{q - 1}{q}. \quad (15)$$

A crucial parameter is the minimum energy, E_{min} , above which electrons are considered to be suprathermal. It is particularly important for spectra significantly steeper than $s = 2$ since for these spectra most of the suprathermal energy is carried by electrons immediately above E_{min} . Therefore, the normalisation of the spectrum depends on E_{min} . Hybrid simulation of a collisionless shock indicate that there is continuous transition from the thermal to the suprathermal distribution (Bennett & Ellison 1995). Simulations of electron acceleration at high Mach number shocks may rely on injection of electrons with a fixed energy. However, the

typical injection energy corresponds to thermal energy in the ICM (Levinson 1994), therefore, the suprathermal spectrum is expected to be a continuous extension of the thermal spectrum. We assume here that the thermal Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution goes over continuously into the power-law spectrum of the suprathermal electrons

$$n_E^{\text{Maxwell}}(E_{\min}) = n_E(E_{\min}).$$

This condition leads to an implicit equation for E_{\min} that has to be solved simultaneously with the normalisation of the spectrum. Basically, the transition energy is tightly coupled to the temperature of the plasma,

$$E_{\min} \sim 10 \times k_B T,$$

if no extreme parameters are chosen.

We can write for the normalisation of the electron spectrum

$$\xi_e u_d \rho_d \frac{q-1}{q} = n_e C_{\text{spec}} m_e c^2 \int_{\tilde{e}_{\min}}^{\infty} d\tilde{e} \tilde{e}^{1-s} \left\{ 1 - \frac{\tilde{e}}{\tilde{e}_{\max}} \right\}^{s-2} \equiv n_e C_{\text{spec}} m_e c^2 I_{\text{spec}},$$

where

$$I_{\text{spec}} = \int_{\tilde{e}_{\min}}^{\infty} d\tilde{e} \tilde{e}^{1-s} \left\{ 1 - \frac{\tilde{e}}{\tilde{e}_{\max}} \right\}^{s-2}. \quad (16)$$

Hence, the constant becomes

$$C_{\text{spec}} = \underbrace{\xi_e \frac{u_d m_p}{c^2 m_e}}_{C_{\text{spec}}^p} \underbrace{\frac{(q-1)}{q} \frac{1}{I_{\text{spec}}}}_{C_{\text{spec}}^q}, \quad (17)$$

where the first factor, C_{spec}^p , includes the plasma contributions, while the second factor, C_{spec}^q , incorporates the dependencies from the shock strength. Since the electron spectrum is steep for Mach numbers $\lesssim 2$, the fraction of relativistic electrons is low in this regime, see Fig. 2. Note that also the temperature of the downstream plasma affects the relativistic electron density. For Mach numbers $\gtrsim 10$ the fraction of relativistic electrons is virtually constant since the electron spectrum varies only negligibly.

In this paper, we only consider the acceleration of *electrons* in order to compute the radio emission from cosmological shocks. Clearly, there is evidence that also protons are accelerated to highly relativistic energies at shocks, probably even more efficiently than electrons, c.f. Levinson (1994). Because of their larger mass, protons cause significantly less synchrotron emission than electrons. However, in inelastic collisions, relativistic protons produce electron/positron pairs which, in turn, radiate synchrotron emission. In the ICM, though, the life time of relativistic protons is about the Hubble time (Dennison 1980). As a result, relativistic protons gradually accumulate in the cluster potential. While the emission by secondary electrons may contaminate to some degree the emission by primary electrons, it is unlikely to account for the bulk of the radio emission from radio relics. Radio relics have a filamentary morphology and the emission is confined to regions close to the shock. This morphology is difficult to explain with superthermal protons and is more likely caused by short-lived, primary electrons. The emission from secondary electrons and positrons produced by relativistic protons may be responsible for the cluster-wide emission observed in radio halos. However, acceleration of protons has another consequence. Suprathermal protons can affect the pressure in the gas and thus affect the structure of the shock. An

admixture of relativistic protons lowers the adiabatic exponent, γ , to below the value for a non-relativistic gas of 5/3. In the extreme case of a fully relativistic gas, γ is 4/3. An effect of a lower γ is that the compression ratio of the shock can be higher, and, as a result, Eq. (13) becomes inaccurate. Moreover, the back-reaction of the relativistic particles on the shock leads to non-linear particle acceleration, which results in flatter particle spectra than the power-laws obtained in the test-particle approximation. Amato & Blasi (2005) have demonstrated the effects of non-linear particle acceleration on shock structure and particle spectra. While there is some evidence for non-linear effects in supernova remnants, the details of this process remain controversial (Ellison & Cassam-Chenaï 2005). In particular, it is unclear to what extent non-linear shock acceleration takes place in cosmological shocks. Here we will adopt the results obtained with the linear test-particle approximation.

2.3 Radiative cooling of high energy electrons

High-energy electrons in the ICM cool mainly by inverse Compton scattering (IC) with CMB photons and by synchrotron radiation losses

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = -\frac{C_{\text{cool}}}{m_e c^2} E^2, \quad (18)$$

where E is the energy of an electron. The cooling constant is given by

$$C_{\text{cool}} \equiv \frac{4\sigma_T}{3m_e c} \{u_{\text{CMB}} + u_B\}, \quad (19)$$

where σ_T is the Thomson cross section, u_{CMB} and u_B are the energy densities of the radiation background and the magnetic field, respectively. We have neglected the effects of adiabatic cooling and heating which depend on the local flow conditions. Adiabatic cooling can in principle be included but for our purpose we will ignore it here. Electron number conservation leads to a PDE for the energy spectrum

$$\frac{\partial n_E}{\partial t} = C_{\text{cool}} \tilde{e}^2 \frac{\partial n_E}{\partial \tilde{e}} + 2C_{\text{cool}} \tilde{e} n_E, \quad (20)$$

with the solution (Kardashev 1962)

$$n_E(E, t) = \begin{cases} n_e C_{\text{spec}} \frac{1}{m_e c^2} \tilde{e}^{-s} \left\{ 1 - \left(\frac{1}{\tilde{e}_{\text{max}}} + C_{\text{cool}} t \right) \tilde{e} \right\}^{s-2} & : \tilde{e} C_{\text{cool}} t < 1 - \tilde{e}/\tilde{e}_{\text{max}} \\ 0 & : \text{elsewhere} \end{cases} \quad (21)$$

We have chosen the cut-off factor in Eq. (14) consistently with this solution, hence the initial spectrum is already a solution to Eq. (20).

The energy densities of the cosmic radiation background with temperature $T_{\text{CMB}} = T_{\text{CMB},0}(z+1)$ and of the downstream magnetic field, B_d are

$$u_{\text{CMB}} = a_{\text{rad}} T_{\text{CMB},0}^4 (z+1)^4 \equiv \frac{B_{\text{CMB}}^2}{8\pi} \quad (22)$$

$$u_B = \frac{B_d^2}{8\pi}, \quad (23)$$

respectively, where z is the redshift and a_{rad} the radiation constant. For convenience, we have introduced a magnetic field equivalent for the background radiation, B_{CMB} . For $z = 0$, B_{CMB} is about $3.24 \mu\text{G}$. Since we are primarily interested in radio emission which is produced by relativistic electrons, it is convenient to express the related equations in terms of the Lorentz factors, γ_L , of the electrons. Only electrons with $\gamma_L \gg 1$ contribute significantly to the radio

emission and we can approximate the Lorentz factor

$$\gamma_L = \frac{E}{m_e c^2} + 1 \approx \frac{E}{m_e c^2} = \tilde{e} \quad \text{for} \quad E \gg m_e c^2. \quad (24)$$

For any observing frequency, there is a minimum Lorentz factor below which the radio emission is negligible. On the other hand, Eq. (21) shows that the electron spectrum has a time-dependent, maximum energy. For any Lorentz factor we can determine the time when then maximum energy in the spectrum equals the given γ_L , which is given by

$$t_{\text{cool}}(\gamma_L) = \frac{1}{C_{\text{cool}} E(\gamma_L)} = 2.32 \times 10^{12} \gamma_L^{-1} (z+1)^{-4} \text{yr},$$

where the right expression is computed for pure inverse-Compton cooling (we have assumed here $\tilde{e}/\tilde{e}_{\text{max}} \ll 1$). After a time $t_{\text{cool}}(\gamma_L)$ there are no electrons with Lorentz factor above γ_L .

2.4 The synchrotron emission

The synchrotron power of a single electron, P_e , that moves with a Lorentz factor γ_L in a magnetic field B is (for an introduction see Rybicki & Lightman 1986)

$$\frac{dP_e(\gamma_L, \nu_{\text{obs}})}{d\nu} = \frac{\sqrt{3} e^3 B \sin \alpha}{m_e c^2} F\left(\frac{\nu_{\text{obs}}}{\nu_c}\right) \equiv C_{\text{sync}} F\left(\frac{\nu_{\text{obs}}}{\nu_c}\right). \quad (25)$$

where e is the electron charge, α the angle enclosed between the direction of the motion and the magnetic field, and ν_c is the characteristic frequency

$$\nu_c = \frac{3\gamma_L^2 e B \sin \alpha}{4\pi m_e c}.$$

In the following, we assume that the directions of the electron motion and the magnetic field are uncorrelated, therefore we take the average value $\langle \sin \alpha \rangle = \pi/4$, where the average is over solid angle. The function $F(x)$ has to be integrated numerically,

$$F(x) = x \int_x^\infty d\xi K_{\frac{5}{3}}(\xi),$$

where K is the modified Bessel function. The emission per volume is given by the convolution

$$\frac{d^2 P(\nu_{\text{obs}})}{dV d\nu} = \int_0^\infty dE n_E P_e = C_{\text{sync}} \int_0^\infty d\gamma_L m_e c^2 n_E(\gamma_L, t) F(\gamma_L, \nu_{\text{obs}}).$$

We introduce a new variable

$$\tau \equiv \sqrt{\frac{3eB}{\nu_{\text{obs}} 16 m_e c}} \gamma_L \equiv C_\tau \gamma_L = 4.85 \times 10^{-5} \left\{ \frac{B}{\mu\text{G}} \right\}^{\frac{1}{2}} \left\{ \frac{1.4 \text{ GHz}}{\nu_{\text{obs}}} \right\}^{\frac{1}{2}} \gamma_L. \quad (26)$$

Substituting γ_L by τ , the integration becomes

$$\frac{d^2 P(\nu_{\text{obs}})}{dV d\nu} = \frac{C_{\text{sync}} m_e c^2}{C_\tau} \int_0^\infty d\tau n_E(\tau, t) F\left(\frac{1}{\tau^2}\right). \quad (27)$$

Assuming a power-law spectrum for n_E , we compute the cumulative emission, see Fig. 3. The bulk of the emission comes from $\tau_{\text{half}} \sim 0.03$. This implies that electrons with Lorentz factors about

$$\gamma_{L, \text{half}} = 6.2 \times 10^2 \left\{ \frac{\mu\text{G}}{B} \right\}^{\frac{1}{2}} \left\{ \frac{\nu_{\text{obs}}}{1.4 \text{ GHz}} \right\}^{\frac{1}{2}} \quad (28)$$

contribute most to the synchrotron emission. Note that at $\gamma_L \sim 3 \times 10^2$ and below, Coulomb losses constitute the most important cooling mechanism for suprathermal electrons, see e.g. Sarazin (1999). Hence, at very low observing frequencies in regions with a rather strong magnetic field, Coulomb cooling becomes important. For instance, LOFAR may observe at 30 MHz a radio halo region where the magnetic field is of the order of $3 \mu\text{G}$. Eq. (28) indicates that the bulk of the radio emission would come from electrons with Lorentz factor $\gamma_L \sim 50$. For Lorentz factor that low Coulomb cooling is important, hence, our analysis may overestimate the synchrotron emission at very low observing frequencies.

2.5 Total emission behind the shock front

In Sec. 2.2, we worked out the relativistic spectrum of electrons accelerated at the shock front, in Sec. 2.3 we worked out the evolution of the spectrum subject to cooling, and in Sec. 2.4 we computed the synchrotron emissivity for a homogeneous electron population. Now we combine these results, to compute the total emission behind the shock front. We adopt the following scenario: Diffuse shock acceleration generates a population of suprathermal electrons. In energy space, these electrons are distributed initially according to a power-law. While they advect with the downstream plasma, the relativistic electrons cool by synchrotron and inverse Compton losses. With increasing distance to the shock front, the maximum electron energy decreases and the radio emission diminishes. The total emission is obtained by summing up all contributions from the plasma from the shock front to the distance where the electron spectrum is too cool to allow any further radio emission.

To compute the spatial distribution of the emission, we have to model the downstream region of the shock front. Instabilities of waves propagating at the shock surface presumably originate turbulence in the downstream plasma immediately behind the shock surface. If this turbulence can also be found at larger distances from the shock surface depends strongly on the viscosity of the ICM, which is still rather uncertain (see e.g. Fabian et al. 2005). If the viscosity is indeed close to the Spitzer value of a hot plasma, as suggested by the H α filaments surrounding NGC 1275, the formation of turbulence would be significantly hampered. Hence, we assume the flow in the downstream region to be steady and laminar.

Diffusion can alter the spatial distribution of suprathermal electrons. In the absence of magnetic fields, the diffusion length is dominated by Coulomb collisions. The presence of even very weak magnetic fields suppresses diffusion in various ways. In directions perpendicular to magnetic field lines electrons propagate roughly with the Bohm diffusion rate. The resulting distance covered within the cooling time of even very energetic particles is negligible for our purposes. Parallel to the magnetic field lines the electrons propagate with the drift velocity, provided the gyroradius is significantly smaller than the coherence length of the magnetic field. The gyroradius of relativistic electrons is given by

$$r_g = \gamma_L \frac{m_e c^2}{eB} \approx 6 \times 10^{-8} \text{ kpc} \left(\frac{\gamma_L}{10^4} \right) \left(\frac{B}{1 \mu\text{G}} \right)^{-1}.$$

Hence, the gyroradius of suprathermal electrons in the ICM is of the order of $10^{12} - 10^{14} \text{ cm}$. The correlation length of magnetic fields generated at the shock surface is expected to be of the order of 10^{10} cm (Medvedev et al. 2006), but it is also expected to increase rapidly (Medvedev et al. 2005). As a result, electrons drift virtually freely along the field lines. Thus, diffusion along field lines is the most efficient transport, any tangling of field lines inside the gyroradius reduces the diffusion (Colafrancesco & Blasi 1998). The electron

drift is hampered by pitch angle scattering with plasma waves, in particular with Alfvén waves (Wentzel 1974). These waves are generated by fast electrons and protons that move with super-Alfvén speed. Thus, collective effects in the plasma suppress the drift parallel to the field lines. Even if the precise treatment of electron diffusion is impossible since the actual state of the downstream plasma is not very well known, the collective effects seem to restrict the diffusion of suprathermal electrons to much smaller scales than those that we discuss in the context of radio relics, see Sec. 3. This allows us to assume that relativistic electrons purely advect with the plasma. Similar conclusions have been drawn in related studies that show, for example, that radio halos cannot be explained by the diffusion of electrons from a central radio galaxy (Jaffe 1977; Dennison 1980; Fujita & Sarazin 2001).

We now compute the total emission from the downstream region. The total emission per shock surface area A is given by the integral over the whole downstream region, the width of which is here parameterized by y

$$\frac{d^2 P(\nu_{\text{obs}})}{dA d\nu} = \int_0^\infty dy \int_{E_{\text{min}}}^\infty dE n_E(E, t) P(\gamma_L, \omega_{\text{obs}}). \quad (29)$$

In any given volume element, the electron spectrum depends on the time passed since the acceleration at the shock front due to cooling. If we assume that the suprathermal electrons advect with the plasma at constant speed, the distance to the shock front and the time passed since acceleration are related by $y = v_d t$. Hence, we can write

$$C_{\text{cool}} \tilde{e} t = C_{\text{cool}} \gamma_L \frac{y}{v_d} = \frac{C_{\text{cool}}}{C_\tau v_d} \tau y.$$

Using the following substitution

$$\eta = \frac{C_{\text{cool}}}{C_\tau v_d} y, \quad (30)$$

the integral Eq. (29) becomes

$$\frac{d^2 P(\nu_{\text{obs}})}{dA d\nu} = C_{\text{all}} \int_0^\infty d\eta \int_{\tau_{\text{min}}}^\infty d\tau \tau^{-s} (1 - \tau\eta)^{s-2} F\left(\frac{1}{\tau^2}\right) \equiv C_{\text{all}} I_\Psi(s). \quad (31)$$

The lower limit, τ_{min} , is in principle defined by the energy where the energy spectrum goes from thermal to suprathermal. However, as discussed above, the bulk of the radiation comes from the region with $\tau \sim 0.03$, which is by orders of magnitude above the value of τ_{min} . Thus, we are free to use 0 as lower integration limit. The rapid decrease of $F(1/\tau^2 \rightarrow \infty)$ ensures that the integrand is well-behaved. As a result, the integral depends only on the spectral index of the electron spectrum, s .

Substituting the normalisation of the electron spectrum, Eq. (21), the emission of a homogenous volume Eq. (27), and Eq. (30) to the total emission Eq. (31), we find

$$C_{\text{all}} = m_e c^2 \frac{C_{\text{sync}}}{C_\tau} \times n_e C_{\text{spec}} \frac{1}{m_e c^2} C_\tau^s \times \frac{C_\tau v_d}{C_{\text{cool}}} = n_e C_{\text{spec}} C_{\text{sync}} C_\tau^s \frac{C_v \sqrt{u_d}}{C_{\text{cool}}},$$

where we have also used $v_d = C_v \sqrt{u_d}$, see Eq. (12). Now, it is useful to combine all factors that depend on the strength of the shock in Eq. (31) in

$$\begin{aligned} \Psi(\mathcal{M}) &= C_\Psi C_v(\mathcal{M}) (C_\tau (1 \mu\text{G}, 1.4 \text{ GHz}))^s C_{\text{spec}}^q I_\Psi \\ &= \frac{(4.85 \times 10^{-4})^s (q-1)}{2.07 \times 10^{-9} q} \sqrt{\frac{(\gamma-1) q r^\gamma - 1}{q r^\gamma} \frac{r-1}{(r-1)}} \frac{I_\Psi}{I_{\text{spec}}}, \end{aligned}$$

where the normalisation constant C_Ψ has been determined by the condition $\Psi(\mathcal{M} \rightarrow \infty) = 1$.

We note that there is also a weak dependency from the downstream plasma temperature via the integral I_{spec} . However, for weak shocks, $\mathcal{M} \lesssim 3$, the expression Ψ decreases rapidly, see Fig. 4, while it is virtually constant with $\Psi \sim 1$ for strong shocks. This implies that rather strong shocks with Mach numbers $\mathcal{M} \gtrsim 3$ are necessary to produce any observable radio emission.

After subsuming the terms governed by the strength of the shock under $\Psi(\mathcal{M})$, we rewrite the total emission Eq. (31)

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dP(\nu_{\text{obs}})}{d\nu} &= A n_e C_{\text{spec}}^p C_{\text{sync}} \left(\frac{B}{\mu\text{G}} \right)^{\frac{s}{2}} \left(\frac{1.4 \text{ GHz}}{\nu_{\text{obs}}} \right)^{\frac{s}{2}} \frac{\sqrt{u_d}}{C_{\text{cool}}} \frac{1}{C_{\Psi}} \Psi(\mathcal{M}) \\ &= 6.4 \times 10^{34} \frac{\text{erg}}{\text{s Hz}} \frac{A}{\text{Mpc}^2} \frac{n_e}{10^{-4} \text{cm}^{-3}} \frac{\xi_e}{0.05} \left(\frac{\nu_{\text{obs}}}{1.4 \text{ GHz}} \right)^{-\frac{s}{2}} \\ &\quad \times \left(\frac{T_d}{7 \text{ keV}} \right)^{\frac{3}{2}} \frac{\left(\frac{B}{\mu\text{G}} \right)^{1+\frac{s}{2}}}{\left(\frac{B_{\text{CMB}}}{\mu\text{G}} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{B}{\mu\text{G}} \right)^2} \Psi(\mathcal{M}). \end{aligned} \quad (32)$$

Note that the emission follows a power-law $\propto \nu^{-s/2}$ and thus, for $s = 2$ it goes as $\propto \nu^{-1}$. Since $\Psi(\mathcal{M}) \leq 1$ and $B^{1+s/2}/(B_{\text{CMB}}^2 + B^2) \leq 1$ for $s = 2$, the factor in front, $6.4 \times 10^{34} \text{ erg s}^{-1} \text{ Hz}^{-1} \text{ Mpc}^{-2}$, poses an upper limit for the synchrotron emission with respect to the Mach number of the shock and the strength of the magnetic field.

If a radio relic is seen edge-on, its extension perpendicular to the shock front can be determined. From our model, we can compute at which distance, y_c , the synchrotron emission in the downstream region decreases to a fraction (which we somewhat arbitrarily set to 30%) of its value immediately behind the shock front. We use such a rather high fraction since up to 10 % of the emission comes from electrons with $\tau \lesssim 0.01$, see Fig. 3. By the help of Eq. (26) we can derive the corresponding Lorentz factor. For instance, in a region with a magnetic field of $4 \mu\text{G}$ and with an observing frequency of 1.4 GHz , 10 % of the synchrotron emission is originated by electrons with $\gamma_L \lesssim 100$. The spectral electron density in this energy range, however, would be significantly diminished by Coulomb cooling, which is not included in our analysis. Thus, the distance where the emission diminishes to 30 % of the initial value seems to be a realistic estimate for the extension of the observable region.

To obtain the width of the emission region, we derive first the dimensionless distance η_c , where η has been introduced in Eq. (30). The emission depends on the distance to the shock front, i. e. η , via the integral $\int \dots d\tau$ in Eq. (31). We compute at which η_c this integral drops to 30 % of its value for $\eta = 0$. Since the integration depends on the slope of the electron spectrum, s , also η_c does. We find a linear dependence, namely $\eta_c(s) = 4.8 \times s - 1.5$. Using the definition of η we derive the effective width of the emission region

$$y_c = \frac{C_{\tau} v_d}{C_{\text{cool}}} \eta_c = 120 \text{ kpc} \frac{\left(\frac{B}{\mu\text{G}} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}}{\left(\frac{B_{\text{CMB}}}{\mu\text{G}} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{B}{\mu\text{G}} \right)^2} \left(\frac{\nu_{\text{obs}}}{1.4 \text{ GHz}} \right)^{\frac{s}{2}} \frac{v_d}{100 \text{ km s}^{-1}} \eta_c \quad (33)$$

This equation shows the dependence of the width of the relic, y_c , on the magnetic field. In the regime of small magnetic field strengths, $B \ll B_{\text{CMB}} = 3.2 \mu\text{G}$ (for $z = 0$), y_c is proportional to $B^{1/2}$. Higher magnetic fields produce thicker relics because a higher magnetic field lowers the relevant Lorentz factor for synchrotron emission. In contrast, in a regime with strong magnetic field, $B \gg B_{\text{CMB}}$, the y_c shrinks with increasing B-field according to $y_c \propto B^{-3/2}$ due to the synchrotron cooling itself. The width, y_c , is maximal for $B \sim 2 \mu\text{G}$, see Fig. 5.

Also the strength of the shock affects the size of the synchrotron emitting area. Rather

weak shocks, $\mathcal{M} \lesssim 3$, are more extended, since the spectrum is steeper. For a spectral index of $s = 3$, electrons with smaller τ are mainly responsible for the emission than for $s = 2$, see Fig. 3. Hence it takes longer to diminish the density of the relevant electron population. For small τ , i. e., weak shocks and strong magnetic fields, the electron population is strongly reduced by Coulomb cooling, which is not included in our model. For those shocks the extension of the emission area is smaller than predicted here.

We can also derive the time after which the emission of the downstream plasma has dropped to 30 % of its initial value from Eq. (33),

$$t_c = \frac{y_c}{v_d} = \frac{C_\tau v_d}{C_{\text{cool}}}.$$

It has a maximum at $B \sim 2 \mu\text{G}$, which amounts to $\sim 1 \text{ Gyr}$ for $\mathcal{M} = 4$.

The code for computing the synchrotron emission and the width of the emission region will be provided upon request.

3 CLUSTER RADIO RELIC EXAMPLES

3.1 Abell-3667

A textbook example of a merging cluster with strong shocks traveling into the cluster periphery is Abell 3667. This cluster is unique since it shows prominent radio emission (Röttgering et al. 1997) which is presumably caused by an outgoing shock wave. In X-rays, there is a double peak in the cluster centre (Shibata et al. 1999) and a cold front indicating a fast moving substructure (Markevitch et al. 2002). Both, indicates that the cluster suffered a merger recently. Even if the X-ray flux from the cluster periphery is not sufficient to identify a shock front at the position of relics, Roettiger et al. (1999) showed that X-ray morphology and position of the relics is consistent with a merger of a 20 % substructure 1 Gyr ago. The spectral index of the north-west relic varies clearly: It steepens from $\alpha \sim 0.6$ at the outer rim to 1.5 at its faint rim towards the cluster centre. This suggests that the relic is basically seen edge-on: The outer rim is populated by recently accelerated electrons, while towards the centre, the electrons population has aged.

A similar steepening of the electron spectrum is expected in our model. As the plasma moves downstream and the electrons age, the radio spectrum steepens. However, the overall spectrum is a power-law, see Eq. (32), even if locally the spectrum may steepen towards higher frequencies. Note that the power-law is only obtained if all contributions to the total emission are present: from the newly accelerated electron population at the shock front up to the old electrons that are too cold to emit significant synchrotron radiation. In order to apply our model to this relic, the downstream region should be homogeneous, i. e. it should not show adiabatic contraction in this region, etc.. The north-west relic in Abell 3667 is quite close to such an ideal scenario. Röttgering et al. (1997) found an overall index of $\alpha = 1.1$. They argued that there is no spectral steeping, what may indicate that we see plasma from the injection to the point where the emission has faded. Using Eq. (32), we conclude that the initial slope in the electron spectrum is $s = 2.2$, which is consistent with $\alpha \sim 0.6$, close to the shock surface (For a homogenous distribution of suprathermal electron with power-law spectral slope, s , the radio emission has the spectral index $\alpha = (s - 1)/2$). By combining Eq. (8), (11) and (13), we can also infer the Mach number of the shock. We find that the Mach number of the shock related to the north-west relic in A 3667 is $\mathcal{M} = 4.7$.

We can use our expression for the total emission to estimate the field strength in the downstream region. Röttgering et al. (1997) derived the temperature and electron density

in the relic region, 10^8 K and 10^{-4} cm $^{-3}$, respectively. Sarazin (1999) argued that about 1% of the thermal energy in the ICM is found in relativistic electrons, with $\gamma_L > 300$. Since our definition of ξ_e includes also supra-thermal electron with $\gamma_L < 300$, we choose a somewhat higher value of $\xi_e = 0.05$. In order to compute the total emission, we also need the area of the shock surface. From Röttgering et al. (1997), Fig. 4, we estimate that the bulk of radio emission is extended over ~ 2.0 Mpc. Using these ICM parameters, we derive the radio emission as function of the shock strength and the downstream magnetic field, see Fig. 6. The observed total emission is $P_{1.4} = 4.1 \times 10^{32}$ erg s $^{-1}$ Hz $^{-1}$. We have derived the Mach number of the shock by the spectral index of the radio emission. By comparing the observed radio power to the computed emission, see Fig. 6, we conclude that the strength of the magnetic field in the relic region is $B \sim 0.2$ μ G.

Since this relic is basically seen edge-on, its extension perpendicular to the shock front, i. e. radial with respect to the cluster centre, can be used to infer the magnetic field strength. In Sec. 2.5, we have introduced a width y_c , which is the shortest distance between the shock front and the downstream position where the radio emission has decreased to 30% of its value at the shock front. The temperature of the downstream plasma and the Mach number of the shock determine the dimensionless quantity η and the downstream velocity, v_d . For the parameters of A3667, we obtain 9.0 and 720 km s $^{-1}$, respectively. With a magnetic field of 0.2 μ G we derive by Eq. (33) that the width y_c amounts 0.3 Mpc, which is consistent with the observed extension of the relic.

If the gas in the downstream region is substantially compressed, the relativistic electrons are re-energized by adiabatic compression. For a polytropic gas with $\gamma = 5/3$, the gas density in the periphery of cluster scales with $\rho_{\text{gas}} \propto (\ln(1 + r/r_s)/(r/r_s))^{3/2}$, where r is the distance from the cluster centre and r_s is the scaling radius of the cluster (Ascasibar et al. 2006). Most relics are situated on the periphery of galaxy clusters. The radio relics in A3667, for example, are located at distances of ~ 2.6 Mpc on either side from the cluster centre. Given that the relics have a width of around 300 kpc and assuming that the downstream gas density follows the density profile of the cluster, the density increase along the relic is no more than $\sim 15\%$. Such a small compression has a moderate effect on the average electron energy, c.f. Enßlin & Gopal-Krishna (2001). Flux conservation leads to $B \propto \rho^{2/3}$, hence the magnetic field can be enhanced maximally a few ten percent. Hence, we neglect the effects of adiabatic compression in the following discussion.

3.2 Abell-115

Another example of a very extended radio relic has been found in Abell 155. Its size tangential to the cluster X-ray emission is more than 2 Mpc. In contrast, it is very thin in radial direction, a few hundred kpc at most. Compared to A3667, it has a much lower radial/tangential extension ratio. Obviously, such a thin radio structure can only be achieved when the line-of-sight is tangential to the shock surface. Another prerequisite is that the radio emission fades quickly while the plasma moves downstream. Considering the discussion above, this implies a low magnetic field strength in the downstream plasma.

Similar to the procedure used for the north-west relic in A3667, we can infer the magnetic field strength in the emission region. We adopt the values given by Shibata et al. (1999) for A115. The cluster temperature in the periphery is about 5 keV, and the electron density of the order of 10^{-4} cm $^{-3}$. Govoni et al. (2001) investigated the radio emission and found a total emission of $P_{1.4} = 1.9 \times 10^{31}$ erg s $^{-1}$ Hz $^{-1}$ with a slope of $\alpha = 1.1$. We use those values and keep the other parameters to the values given above, e.g. the energy fraction in suprathermal electrons ξ_e . Since the spectral slope is the same as in A3667 the Mach number of the shock

is again $\mathcal{M} = 4.7$. The lower temperature in the downstream region also lowers the radio emission. However, the large difference to A3667 in radio power can only be achieved if the magnetic field is lower. We find that $B \sim 0.1 \mu\text{G}$ reproduces the observed emission well.

In the direction perpendicular to the shock front, the emission has dropped to 30 % of its initial value at a distance of 0.1 Mpc from the shock front. This value is also consistent with the observations.

3.3 Abell-2256

Abell 2256 shows a radio halo and relic (Clarke & Ensslin 2006). The relic is seen close to face-on, hence the spectral steepening is only mild. The average slope is $\alpha = -1.2$, which indicates a shock with Mach number $\mathcal{M} = 3.3$. From Rephaeli & Gruber (2003) we adopt a cluster temperature of 7.8 keV. The observed extension of the relic is about 1 Mpc, hence we assume a shock surface area of 1 Mpc^2 . The power, $P_{1.4} = 3.6 \times 10^{31} \text{ erg s}^{-1} \text{ Hz}^{-1}$ is reproduced provided the magnetic field has a strength of $B \sim 0.3 \mu\text{G}$.

This value for the magnetic field is almost a magnitude lower as that in the central halo region (see Clarke & Ensslin (2006)) and indicates that the magnetic field decreases with increasing radius from the centre.

If the radio relic is being produced by a giant shock wave, what has produced the radio halo in Abell 2256? Can the two phenomena be linked? With the magnetic field in the plasma also the relevant Lorentz factor for the radio emission changes. If the magnetic field in the halo region is about a few μG as indicated by Clarke & Ensslin (2006), the Lorentz factor of those electrons that produce the radio emission is $\gamma_{\text{L,half}} \sim 300$. In contrast, in the relic region the lower magnetic field implies that the Lorentz factor of the radio-emitting electrons is $\gamma_{\text{L,half}} \sim 1000$. At the field strengths in both relic and halo, we can assume that the cooling of the electron spectrum is mainly caused by inverse-Compton cooling. Since the cooling time is inversely proportional to γ_{L} , the cluster core would emit synchrotron radiation three times longer. Hence it is conceivable that the halo and relic are caused by the same shock front.

4 RADIO EMISSION VERSUS CLUSTER TEMPERATURE

The example clusters discussed above indicate that shocks which produce presently observable radio emission have Mach numbers of about $\mathcal{M} \sim 3 - 5$. It is interesting to note that significantly stronger shocks show only moderately more radio emission if all other downstream parameters are the same, as is shown in Fig. 4. This is due to the fact that strong shocks reach an asymptotic slope for the electron spectrum. Much weaker shocks would have virtually no radio emission. Gabici & Blasi (2003) found that it is quite unlikely to achieve shock strength of $\mathcal{M} \gtrsim 4$ in a cluster merger. The combination of the paucity of shocks with $\mathcal{M} \gtrsim 4$ and the strong suppression of radio emission in weaker shocks may explain to some extent why only so few radio relics have been found.

If we consider the magnetic field dependency in Eq. (32), one striking feature is that for strong field strengths, $B \gg B_{\text{CMB}}$, the emission is constant. Hence, even an arbitrarily strong shock with an arbitrarily strong magnetic field would not exceed an emission of $\sim 6 \times 10^{34} \text{ erg s}^{-1} \text{ Hz}^{-1}$, with standard parameters for temperature and density. Thus, there is a distinct upper limit for the radio emission. Intriguingly, our few examples support the assumption that the magnetic field in the ICM is correlated with its temperature. We found that A3667 and A2256 which have temperatures of about 8 keV lead to magnetic field strengths of 0.2-0.3 μG . In contrast, A115 with a temperature of 5 keV shows a field strength of 0.1 μG in the relic region. However, we restrict ourselves here to the custom assumption

that a fraction, ξ_B , of the energy dissipated at the shock front is converted into magnetic fields,

$$\frac{B^2}{8\pi} = \xi_B m_p n_e u. \quad (34)$$

On average, the magnetic field energy fraction is $\langle \xi_B \rangle = 6 \times 10^{-4}$ for our example clusters, see Tab. 1. Thus, only a very small fraction of the dissipated energy has to be converted. For A115 and A2256, the values of ξ_B may be underestimated to some extent, since we have assumed that, at the location of the relics, the plasma has the average cluster temperature. Only for A3667, a temperature estimate for the relic region is available. However, we use Eq. (34) to compute the radio power as a function of the cluster temperature, see Fig. 7, solid line. Here we have assumed that the typical strength of a strong shock in the ICM is $\mathcal{M} = 4$ and that the length scale of the shock fronts is 1 Mpc.

Our estimate for the radio emission is close to the emission observed for radio halos. This may indicate that a significant part of the radio halo emission may be the result of an earlier merger shock. The observed radio power-temperature relation seems to be steeper than our result. This may be attributed to scaling relations that we have ignored in our analysis. It seems plausible that the linear size of radio halos depends on the cluster temperature, see Fig. 8. In average one may expect that the extension of halos is a fraction of the virial radius, r_{vir} which scales with the cluster temperature by $r_{\text{vir}} \propto M^{1/3} \propto T^{1/2}$ (for cluster scaling relations see e. g. Eke et al. 1998). Including the linear size-temperature relation into our estimate for the radio power, we obtain a somewhat steeper dependency, see Fig. 7. The slope of the radio power is now $dP/d\nu \propto T^{(12+s)/4}$, see Eq. (32), where we

have used $B^2 \propto T$ and $A \propto T$. Hence, the strong temperature dependence is caused by the combination of several facts: With increasing cluster temperature, the electron density in the relevant Lorentz factor regime increases, the magnetic field scales with the temperature, and the average linear size of the emission increases with cluster temperature, i. e. its mass.

5 COSMIC ACCRETION SHOCKS

Numerical simulations suggest that structure formation shocks may be subdivided into two classes (Ryu et al. 2003). Merger (or ‘internal’) shocks are caused by the supersonic motion of infalling substructures, as seen, e. g., in A 3667 or in the ‘bullet cluster’ 1E 0657-56 (Markevitch et al. 2002). Typically, the Mach number of these shocks is rather low, $\mathcal{M} \lesssim 3$, (Gabici & Blasi 2003), since the cluster temperature reflects already the depth of the gravitational potential which also determines the maximal velocities in the course of the merger. When the shocks travel outwards into the cluster surroundings, the Mach number increases since the gas there has virtually never been shock-heated and is therefore much colder. Numerical simulations indicate that those accretion (or ‘external’) shocks reach Mach numbers $\gg 10$ (Miniati et al. 2000; Ryu et al. 2003; Pfrommer et al. 2006; Hoeft et al. 2006). Basically, clusters are enveloped by a sphere of accretion shocks at a distance, r_{sh} , of a few times the virial radius, r_{vir} , (Nagai & Kravtsov 2003; Ryu et al. 2003; Hoeft et al. 2006). Due to the accretion shock, the temperature of the gas rises from $\sim 10^3 - 10^4$ K to almost the cluster temperature. To obtain a rough estimate for the temperature in the cluster periphery, we utilize the profile given by Loken et al. (2002)

$$T = 1.3 \langle T \rangle \left(1 + 1.5 \frac{r}{r_{\text{vir}}} \right)^{-1.6},$$

where $\langle T \rangle$ is the emission-weighted temperature of the cluster. With $r_{\text{sh}} \sim 3r_{\text{vir}}$ the temperature in the downstream region of accretion shocks is $\sim 0.09 \langle T \rangle$. Hence, we can determine the total emission caused by accretion shocks surrounding clusters of galaxies. For a cluster with $\langle T \rangle = 20 \text{ keV}$ and $r_{\text{vir}} = 2 \text{ Mpc}$, we estimate the temperature in the downstream region of the accretion shocks, namely 1.7 keV . Assuming that the electron density at such a large distance from the cluster centre amounts to 10^{-6} cm^{-3} , we derive the magnetic field by Eq. (34), we obtain $0.01 \mu\text{G}$. With the help of Eq. (32), we compute the total emission of a sphere with 12 Mpc diameter. We obtain for a strong shock, $\mathcal{M} \gg 10$,

$$\left. \frac{dP(1.4 \text{ GHz})}{d\nu} \right|_{\text{acc-sh}} \sim 2.2 \times 10^{29} \text{ erg s}^{-1} \text{ Hz}^{-1}.$$

In reality, the accretion shock geometry is much more complex and projection effects have to be considered. Therefore, a significant fraction of the emission may come from a small region. Note that for such weak magnetic fields the emission region has only a small extension perpendicular to the shock front ($\sim 50 \text{ kpc}$).

Upcoming radio telescopes such as LOFAR and SKA will allow to explore the radio sky with significantly improved sensitivity and resolution in the frequency range from 10 MHz to 1 GHz . Keshet et al. (2004) inferred that the radio emission from structure formation shocks may become detectable with these telescopes. Hence, in near future we will have much stronger constraints for modeling the relativistic electron populations in clusters of galaxies.

If we assume that 3% of the emission comes from a rather compact region, we expect at 30 MHz a spot-like emission of $\sim 4 \times 10^{29} \text{ erg s}^{-1} \text{ Hz}^{-1}$ (note $P \propto \nu^{-s/2}$). If this cluster is located at $z = 0.1$ the flux would amount to 1 mJy . This is close to the sensitivity of LOFAR, hence accretion shocks with optimal conditions for radio emission will presumably be observed with sensitive radio telescopes in near future.

6 SUMMARY

Galaxy clusters grow either by mergers or by steady accretion, both of which produce large shock fronts. In particular, the extended radio relics (*radio gischt*) in the periphery of clusters are believed to trace these fronts. In analogy to supernova remnants, diffuse shock acceleration may produce a population of relativistic electrons that cool in the downstream region of the shock by inverse Compton and synchrotron losses. Here, we compute the total emission in the downstream region per unit area of the shock surface. The resulting analytic expression shows several interesting features: (i) the total spectrum is a power-law even if locally the spectrum may steepen towards higher frequencies. The overall slope is close to unity and depends solely on the slope of the initial electron spectrum which, in turn, is directly related to the strength of the shock. Thus, the overall slope of the radio emission may allow us to infer the Mach number of the shock. (ii) the radio emission depends almost like a step-function on the shock strength. For Mach numbers $\lesssim 3$, only very little radiation is emitted while for $\mathcal{M} \gtrsim 10$ the emission saturates. (iii) in the regime of weak magnetic fields, $B \ll B_{\text{CMB}}$, the total emission is proportional to $B^{1+s/2}$ while for strong magnetic fields the total emission is virtually independent of B . (iv) The width of the emission region, i.e. the extension perpendicular to the shock front, has a maximum extension for $B \sim B_{\text{CMB}}$.

We analysed the relics in A 115, A 2256, and A 3667 and found that the shocks have Mach numbers in the range of 3 to 5. Weaker shocks would lead to practically no radio emission. Furthermore, we can infer the magnetic fields in the emission regions. We find that for three sample relics the magnetic field is in the range from 0.1 to $0.3 \mu\text{G}$. The extension of the relics

perpendicular to the shock front serves as an independent indicator for the field strength. The energy fraction stored in the magnetic field seems to be rather low, namely $\xi_B \sim 10^{-3}$.

Assuming that the magnetic field energy density is on average proportional to the thermal one, we derive a radio emission-temperature relation. It agrees strikingly well with that found for radio halos. Moreover, if in the centres of galaxy clusters, i.e. where the radio halos reside, the magnetic fields is about a few μG , the extension of the emission region perpendicular to the shock front would be several hundred kpc. Therefore, it is conceivable that at least part of the halo emission stems from shock waves which swept over the cluster centres within the last 1 Gyr. Using the value obtained for ξ_B , we have finally estimated the emission from cosmic accretion shocks. We inferred that at 30 MHz a radio power of $10^{29} - 10^{30} \text{ erg s}^{-1} \text{ Hz}^{-1}$ may be expected from regions where the accretion shock surface is parallel to the line-of-sight. A detailed computation of the cosmic radio background will be subject of a forthcoming study.

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	z	T [keV]	LLS [Mpc]	$P_{1.4}$ [$10^{31} \frac{\text{erg}}{\text{s Hz}}$]	α	\mathcal{M}	B [μG]	y_c [Mpc]	ξ_B 10^{-3}
Abell 115	0.1971	5	2.5	1.9	1.1	4.7	0.1	0.1	0.2
Abell 2256	0.0594	7.8	1.1	3.6	1.2	3.3	0.3	0.4	1.1
Abell 3667	0.055	8	2.0	41.0	1.1	4.7	0.2	0.3	0.5

Table 1. Observed and derived parameters for our three model relics. For all computations we have assumed an electron density of $n_e = 10^{-4} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. LLS indicates the longest linear extension of a relic. To determine the radio power of the relics we use $H_0 = 50 \text{ km s}^{-1} \text{ Mpc}^{-1}$ in order to be consistent with computations in literature.

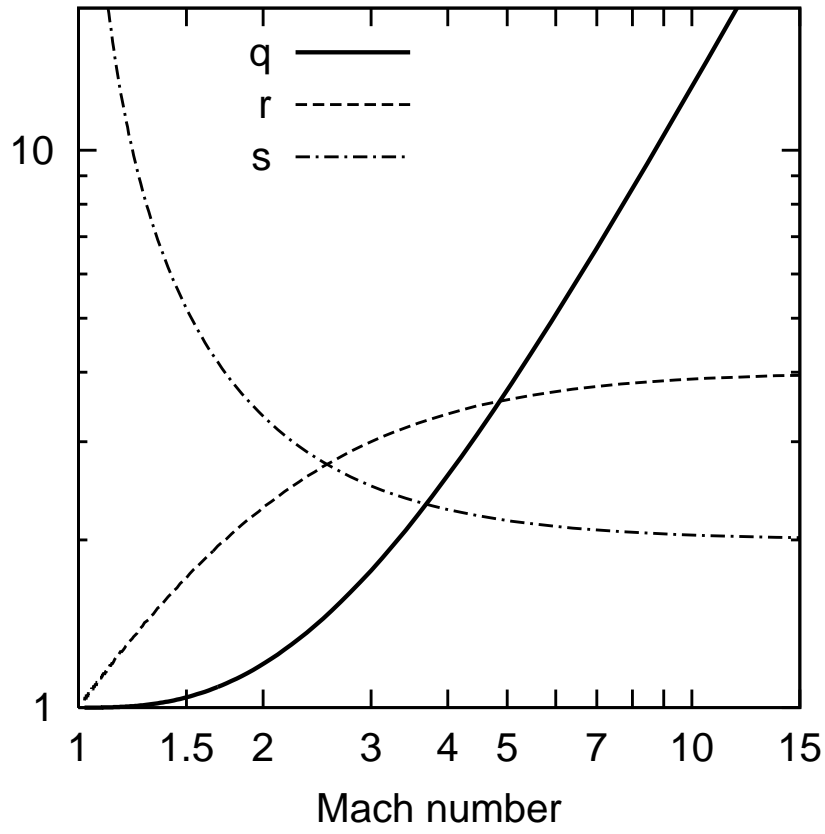


Figure 1. Entropy ratio, $q = S_d/S_u$, compression ratio, $r = \rho_d/\rho_u$, and spectral index, s , of the electron spectrum generated by diffuse shock acceleration as a function of the Mach number.

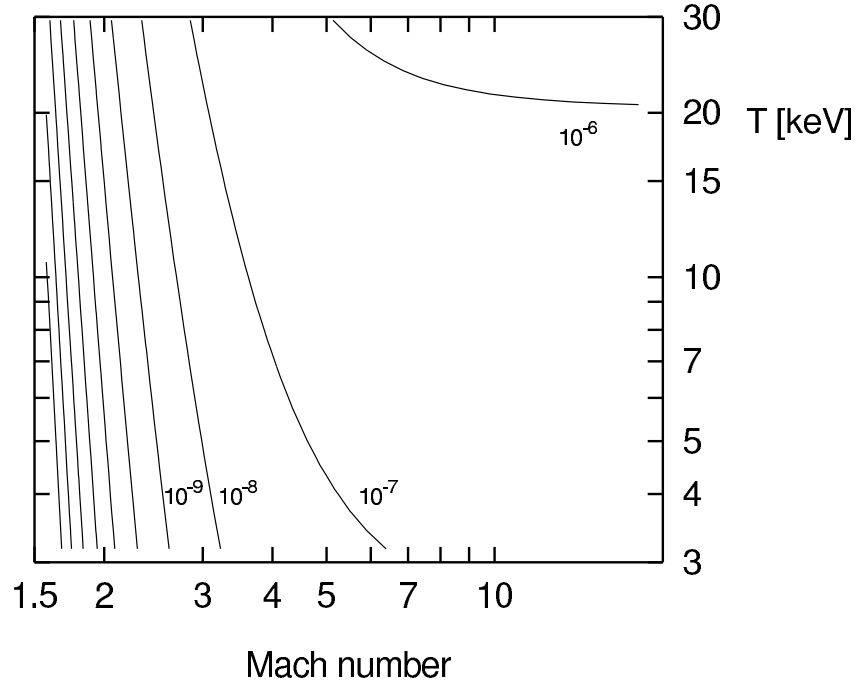


Figure 2. Contours of the fraction of relativistic electrons with $\gamma_L > 300$. Contour levels are at 10^{-6} , 10^{-7} , 10^{-8} , etc.. The energy fraction of suprathermal electrons is $\xi_{\text{elec}} = 0.05$. The initial cutoff in the spectrum is at $\tilde{\epsilon} = 10^7$.

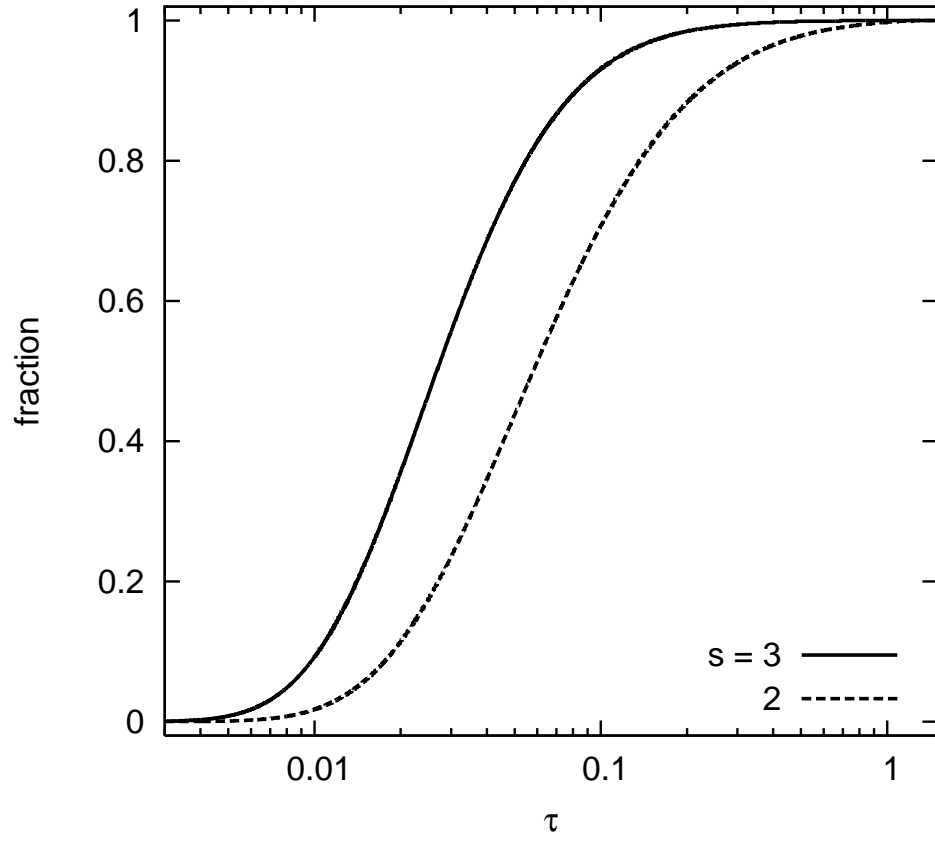


Figure 3. Cumulative synchrotron emission. Computed according to Eq. (27) assuming a power-law for the electron energy spectrum, $n_E(\tau) \propto \tau^{-s}$.

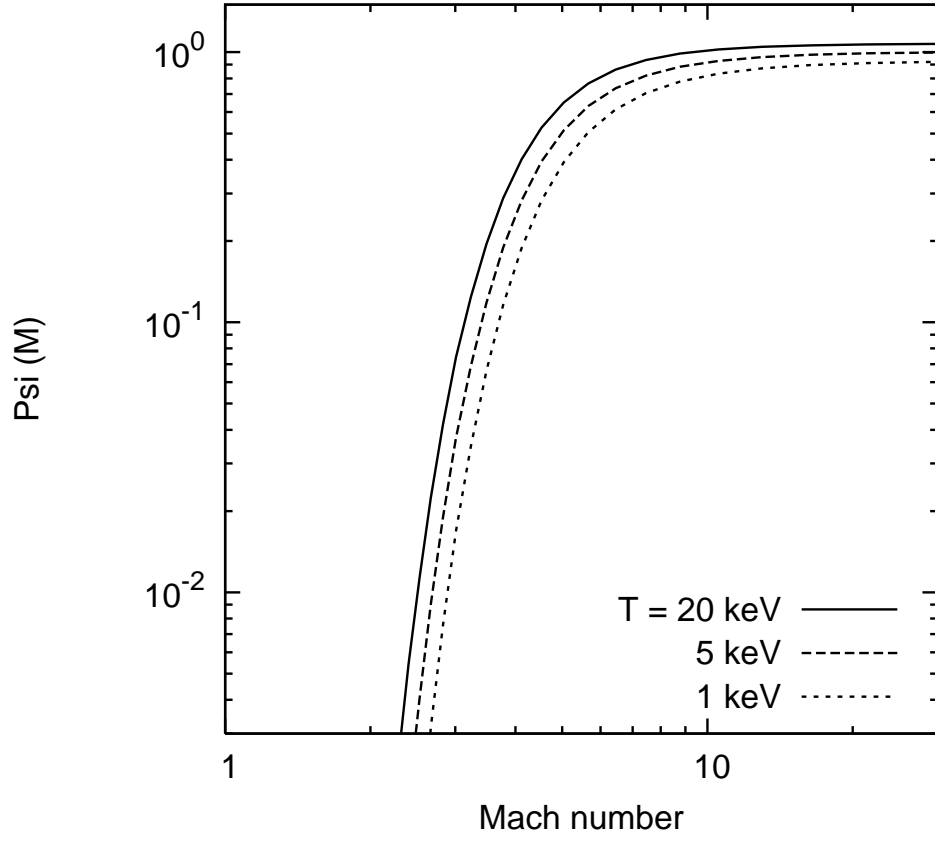


Figure 4. Ψ as function of the Mach number. Also the downstream temperature has a small impact.

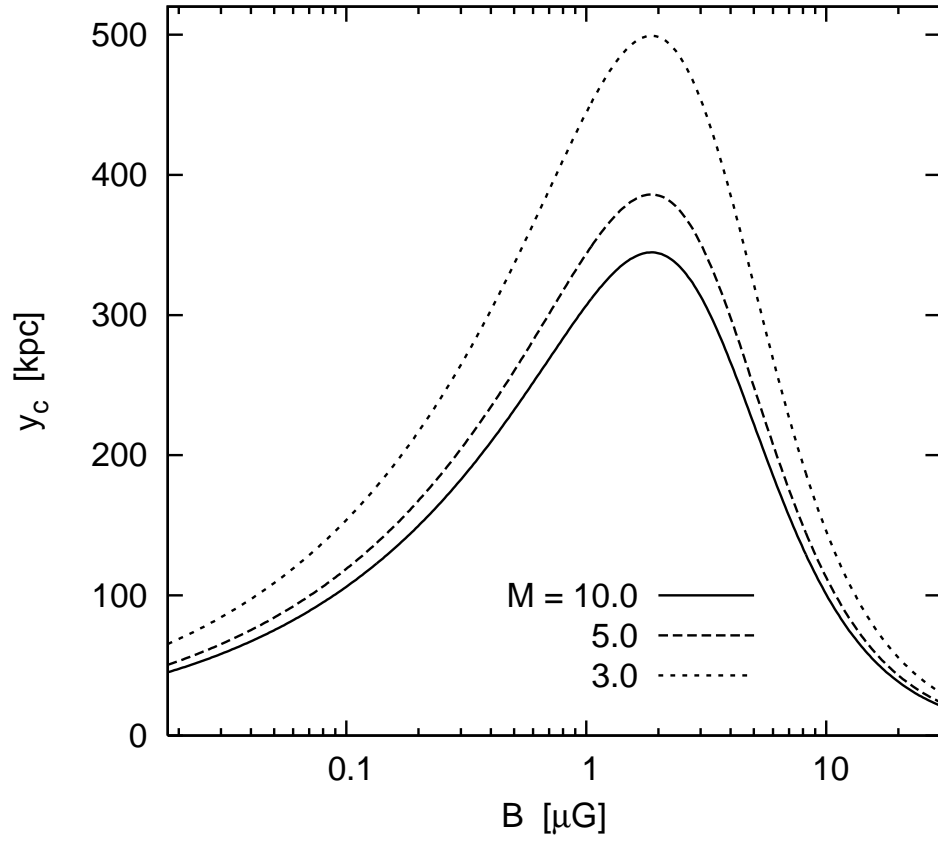


Figure 5. The distance at which the radio emission decreases to 30 % of the value at the shock front.

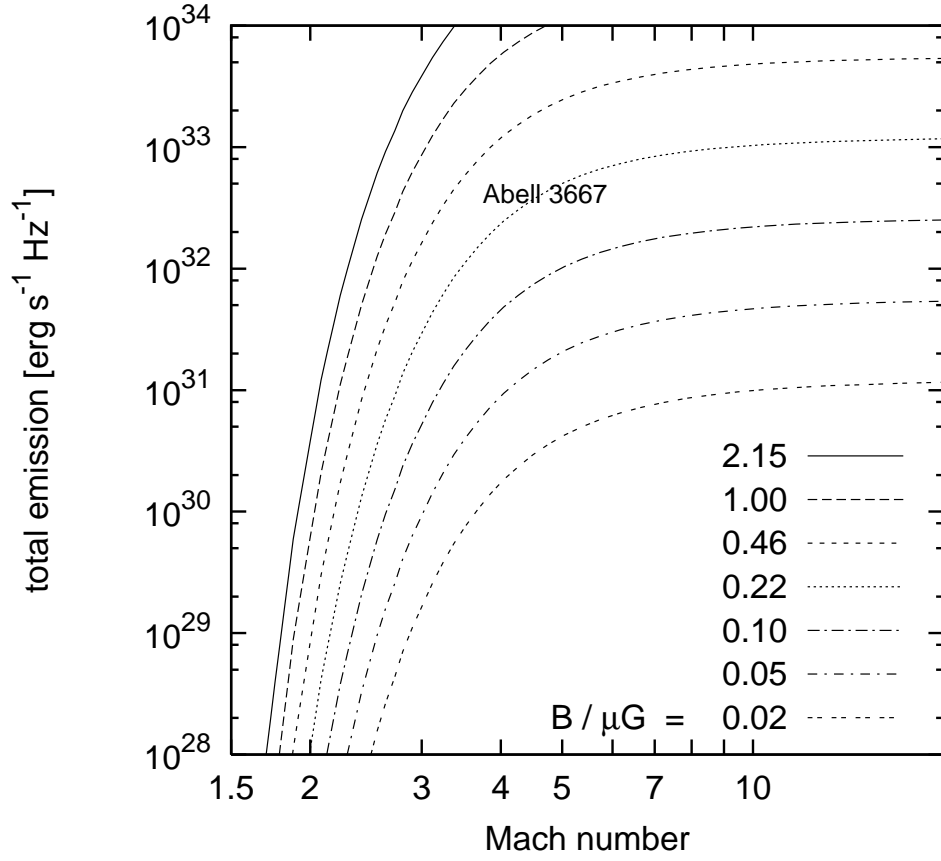


Figure 6. Radio power as a function of Mach number for different magnetic field strengths. We have marked the position of the radio power and the derived Mach number for Abell 3667.

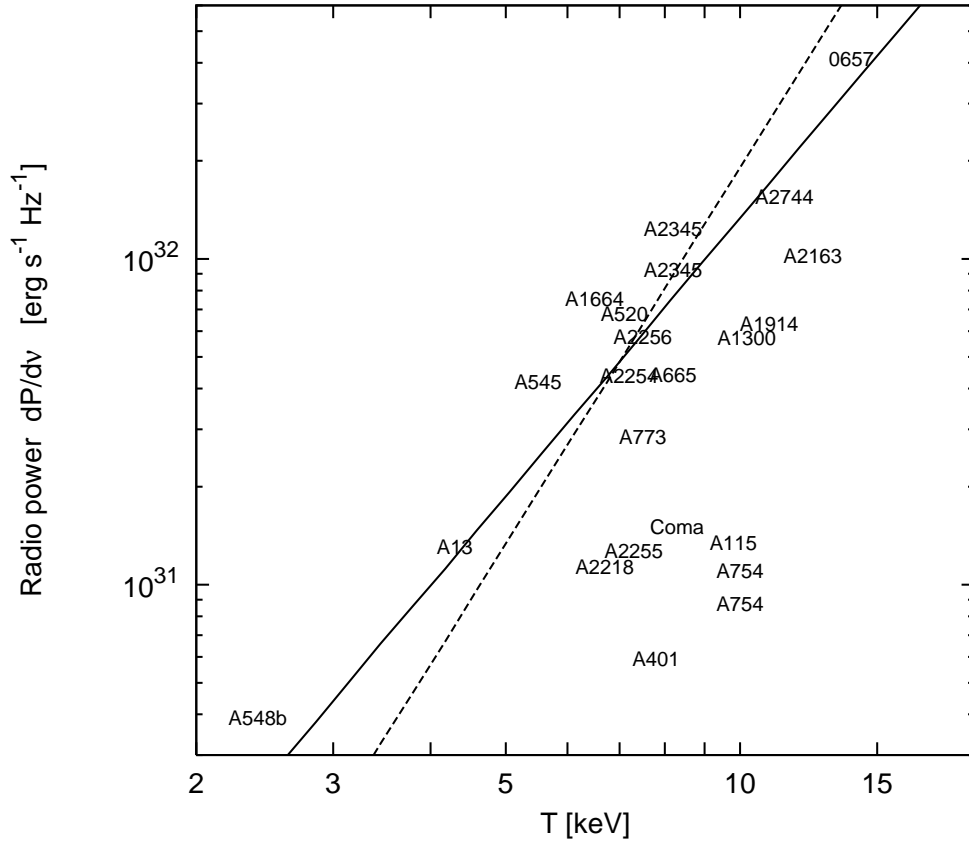


Figure 7. Radio power for an observing frequency of 1.4 GHz versus cluster temperature. The solid line indicates the radio power for a shock front with an area of 1 Mpc 2 , while the dashed line is computed for a temperature dependent area, $A \propto T$, see Fig. 8. Radio and X-ray data for the clusters are taken from Giovannini et al. (1999), Govoni et al. (2001), and Govoni et al. (2004).

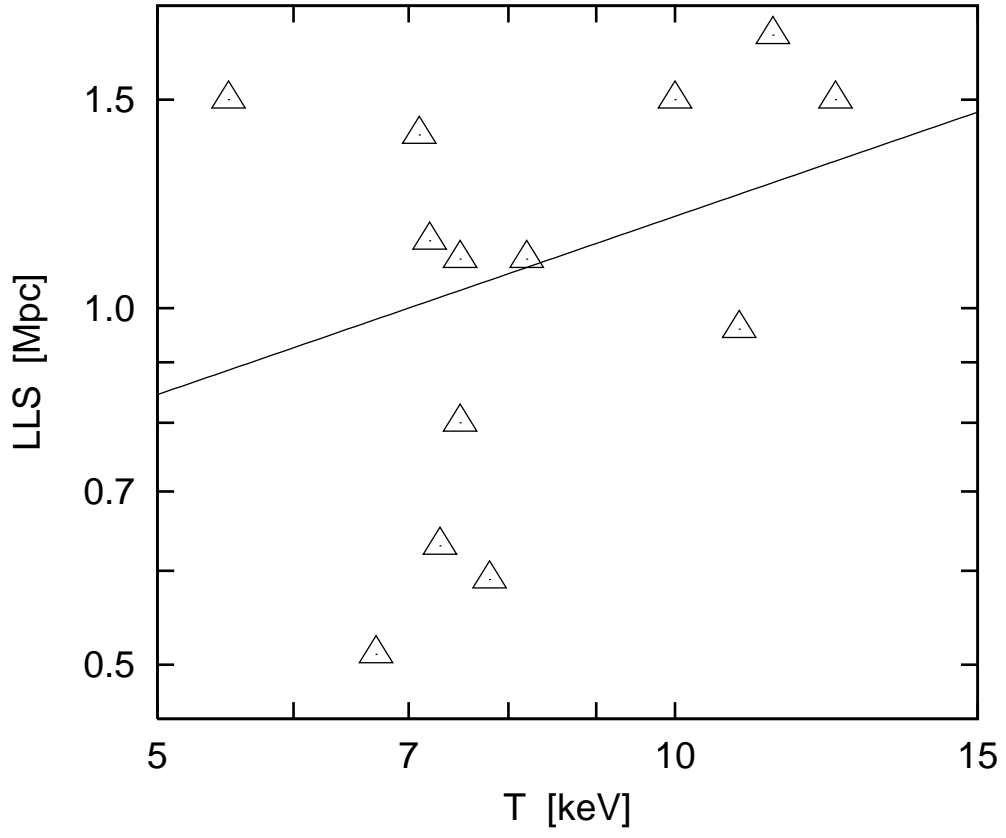


Figure 8. Longest linear size versus cluster temperature for radio halos shown in Fig. 7. The solid line indicates $LLS = 1 \text{ Mpc}(T/7 \text{ keV})^{1/2} T$.